VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

OCTOBER 2010

FOUR DOLLARS

Briery Fishing • Search & Rescue Teams • Mockhorn Memories

Bob Duncan
Executive Director

Virginia continues to grapple with the ever-growing threats posed by invasive species. Natural resource managers must, of necessity, focus their attention on the plants, animals, and insects causing the most severe damage—including disease carriers, such as the fungus that attacked the stately American chestnut. Alien species disrupt natural systems at great economic and ecological cost to the state. In fact, some estimates put Virginia losses at over $1 billion annually due to these unwanted "come heres."

You may remember that after exotic zebra mussels were found in a Virginia quarry site in 2002, DGIF biologists conducted a first-ever, successful eradication of that critter—which has a track record of causing millions of dollars of damage to public water supply and treatment facilities.

State agencies under the Secretary of Natural Resources and the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry currently manage or monitor a wide range of invasive species. Specifically under the microscope are the exotics that have made headlines over the past ten years or so: the zebra mussel, Northern snakehead fish, Chinese mitten crab, marsh intruder phragmites, tree-of-heaven, emerald ash borer, and the rapa whelk. But others remain on the watch list and new threats are emerging.

The Natural Heritage Program at DCR, along with other conservation partners, convened a workshop last fall to teach control methods to those on the front lines battling invasive plants: foresters, master naturalists, and others. Training continues.

Prevention is still the most effective strategy for fighting invasives. Many times, the simple act of washing off equipment, boots, and clothing after use on the water and in the field can go a long way toward preventing the spread of unknown "hitchhikers" during the next trip. I encourage all hunters, anglers, boaters, and outdoors men and women to find out more and to take an active role in halting the further spread of exotics that take such a terrible toll on native wildlife and their habitats. Thinking back on the devastating loss of the American chestnut reminds me just how serious the consequences can be.

To learn more about invasive plants, go to: www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage. Information about some of the most invasive wild animals and fish in the state can be found on our website at: www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife.

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The Northern snakehead has established a presence in the Potomac watershed. Shown here, Director Bob Duncan holds a specimen captured during a recent monitoring trip. Just how this invasive fish will impact the health of native fisheries in area rivers remains to be seen.

Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; To provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation and to work diligently to safeguard the rights of the people to hunt, fish and harvest game as provided for in the Constitution of Virginia; To promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing; To provide educational outreach programs and materials that foster an awareness of and appreciation for Virginia's fish and wildlife resources, their habitats, and hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities.

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Virginia Wildlife (ISSN 0042 6792) is publishe monthly by the Virginia Department of Game an Inland Fisheries. Send all subscription orders an address changes to Virginia Wildlife, P. O. Box 747 Red Oak, Iowa 51591-0477. Address all other com munications concerning this publication to Virgini Wildlife, P. O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Stree Richmond, Virginia 23230-1104. Subscription rate are $12.95 for one year, $23.95 for two years; $4.0 per each back issue, subject to availability. Out-o country rate is $24.95 for one year and must be pai in U.S. funds. No refunds for amounts less tha $5.00. To subscribe, call toll-free (800) 710-936 POSTMASTER: Please send all address changes t Virginia Wildlife, P.O. Box 7477, Red Oak, Iow 51591-0477. Postage for periodicals paid at Rich mond, Virginia and additional entry offices.

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The long rifle flintlock was a weapon of choice during colonial times. Here, craftsman Lowell Haarer loads the gun by using a ramrod to force powder and ball down the barrel. See story on page 4.
Photo ©Dwight Dyke

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Crafting a Connection to History

story by Clarke C. Jones • photos by Dwight Dyke

His hands trembled slightly as young Caleb Rutledge quickly tried to reload his long gun. It would not be the first time a deer had been knocked down, only to get up and run again. He thought his aim was true, but with all the smoke from the black powder he couldn't be sure. What he was sure of, though, was that finding a buck in the rapidly fading sunlight, even one that may have only run a hundred yards, would not be easy. In the middle to late 1700s, a boy was expected to do a man's work, and Caleb's job was to help supply meat to the tiny settlement of Martin's Station, which lay along the Wilderness Road—an area that many years later would become Lee County, Virginia. It was with a certain amount of pride that he carried his father's flintlock. He had proven his skills with this handmade weapon two years ago and was considered a valued member of this remote outpost.

Caleb moved quickly and quietly toward his quarry, only to find splotches of blood where he had sighted the deer. The deer had been hit and, judging from the amount of blood, could not have gone far. Just as he started to track the animal, he heard the hurried steps of something coming

towards him—then stop. The woods became too quiet. Suddenly, a squirrel barked a warning and Caleb knew instantly it would not be the deer. Crouching behind a large hemlock, he slowly peeked around it to see what it might be, and almost stopped breathing. Standing over the slain deer were three Indians, wearing paint.

Caleb didn't know whether they were Muscogee or Cherokee. It really didn't matter. What he *did* know was that they would not be this far east unless there was trouble. Most of them had moved to Kentucky with the signing of the latest treaty. However, not every Colonial knew just where the latest Indian borders were, and some of those who did just didn't care. He also knew it was not the deer that piqued their interest. If he was younger, the Indians might take him captive and raise him as their own. But any settler who was old enough to shoot deer was a threat and he had heard how Indians dealt with threats.

The three Indians said nothing, but with hand signals split up in three different directions. Caleb knew it would not be long before they found him and moved in the only direction left open

Lowell Haarer takes aim with one of his creations, above. Left, he primes the gun by putting a little powder in the flash pan. That aids in setting off the explosion needed to propel the shot or bullet.

to the young boy. If he could get back to the path that led to the settlement before the Indian scouts found it, he might have a chance. But if they found the path first, at least one of them would be concealed alongside to watch whoever might use it. Staying low and walking in a painfully slow squat, Caleb inched toward the path when suddenly a loud "WHOOP!" rang out. Caleb had been flushed! Now it was a footrace down the path and to the settlement. As Caleb darted around a bend, two tall figures blocked his way. He hesitated for a second when a voice cried out, "Keep a com'n boy! We ain't got all day!"

Caleb ran around the two men. The Indians rounded the same bend and two flintlocks sent a volley toward them. Seconds later, four more feet joined Caleb's, and the three of them made a hasty retreat to Martin's Station. "It's the flintlock they want," one of the settlers uttered. "If it looks like you are not going to make it, drop it and keep running."

And so unfolded one of my childhood dreams. Many of those dreams included colorful scenarios tied to a particular weapon I was fascinated with at the time; in this case, the long rifle.

The highly prized long rifle flintlock, also known as the Pennsylvania or Kentucky rifle, replaced the matchlock system for firing a gun and was considered a weapon of high technology by both Indians and early settlers. It is still in demand

today, not only by reenactors and those who do black powder hunting, but also by those who appreciate handmade craftsmanship that becomes a work of art.

One of these craftsmen is Lowell Haarer, of Linville, whose quest to make authentic handmade flintlocks may have been divine intervention. Haarer, a part-time minister at Zion Hill Mennonite Church, met his wife Mim at Rosedale Bible College. While on their honeymoon in Colonial Williamsburg, he viewed a documentary film on gun-making at the visitor center which inspired him to start crafting his own flintlocks. Lowell constructed his first flintlock in 1985, but at that time making flintlocks was more of a hobby for the former cabinetmaker. About five years ago, Haarer decided to change his avocation into his vocation.

"It takes anywhere from 150 to 180 hours for me to make a flintlock rifle, depending on the detail, style, and whether I also hand-forge the firing mechanisms of the flintlock. I can make just about every piece of the flintlock, but I normally purchase the barrel, and some of the locks." He

The trigger mount and flint locking device are ready to be added to the rifle.

added, "I do all the relief work on the wood with tools I make, as well."

Lowell uses a lathe to cut the pattern of the stock from a block of wood. Then with saws, chisels, rasps, and files the wood is removed down to its final size. He likely will choose a piece of curly maple, walnut, or cherry, because he believes those woods are the most durable. Lowell has two types of forges: coal and gas. Although more economical, the coal forge takes a while to reach optimum temperature, so he uses the gas forge when quick heat is needed for a short time, such as to bend a casting or temper springs. After much of the work is completed, the long, slender forend (the wooden part that lies underneath the barrel) is then produced to attach to the barrel. This wooden piece adds to the beauty of a flintlock and is only 1/16 of an inch in thickness! It is Lowell's attention to historical detail in every flintlock he produces which makes his work stand out. Although flintlocks were built for two centuries, Haarer's guns are from the period of 1770 to 1790.

One of the key pieces in making a flintlock work, of course, is flint. "In colonial days flint was shipped from

Lowell hand chisels the engraving on his flintlocks.

Top, both a gas and a coal forge (shown) are used by the gunmaker. Above, Haarer cuts out the stock pattern for his next flintlock.

Europe. Native flint, like the Indians used for arrowheads, can be found here; however, it does not last very long in a flintlock. "English flint is much better," related Haarer.

"Repeated firing dulls the sharpened edge of the flint, so it needs to be knapped, which is sharpening by breaking off a piece of the front edge of the flint. This is done with a knapping hammer which the shooter carries in his shooting bag," he explained. A shooting bag was an essential item a hunter or soldier would carry to utilize a flintlock. In it he packed extra flint, balls or shot, lubricated patches that acted as wadding, a priming flask, a touch hole pick, and other miscellaneous tools required to keep a flintlock operational.

Haarer's flintlocks are available in various calibers. "The .45 caliber is great for target shooting because of good velocity with very manageable recoil. I am building more guns in the .54 to .62 caliber range because they pack more punch for deer hunting," the gunmaker explained. However, according to Haarer, the .50 caliber seems to represent the best of both worlds and is used often.

It is remarkable how Haarer produces such beautiful and useful works of art from his small shop in Linville; he utilizes every inch of space. Although many people first glimpse Lowell's masterful craftsmanship at rendezvous or living history events, or through the internet, or at gun shows, Lowell thinks that word-of-mouth is still the way most of them find out about his flintlocks. People must be talking because Haarer's flintlocks have not only found their way to Virginians but also to flintlock aficionados in Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Although today it may be thought of as an obsolete hunting tool, in its time the flintlock was a significant technical innovation and could be considered one of the forerunners of all guns used today. Obviously, Virginians and many others recognize its beauty and appreciate the skill and patience that artisan Lowell Haarer dedicates to conserve this aspect of America's history. □

Clarke C. Jones spends his spare time with his black Lab, Luke, hunting up good stories. You can visit Clarke and Luke on their website at www.clarkecjones.com.

A flintlock in action! It's important to wear eye protection when shooting any gun.

A Passion to Serve

K-9 Search and Rescue: a calling and a godsend

story and photos
by Gail Brown

When the phone rings in the middle of the night, as K-9 Search and Rescue volunteers say it most often does, it would seem natural to hesitate—to fear the worst. Yet, being prepared and responding quickly to emergency calls is what all K-9 Search and Rescue (SAR) teams demand of themselves. In all cases, SAR volunteers say they'd rather be called, and if not needed turned back, than lose precious minutes should situations go unresolved. This commitment does not go unnoticed.

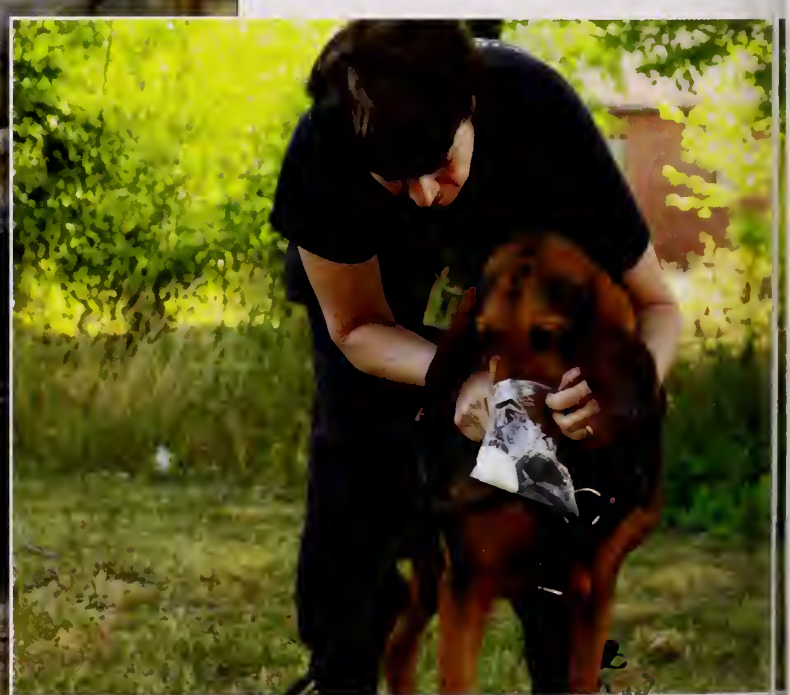
"These are very dedicated people," stated Conservation Police Officer Wes Billings. Conservation police officers often work closely with SAR teams and other law enforcement agencies in search and rescue situations. "It's a matter of us all working together... each has a role to play," he explained.

While this story centers on just two K-9 SAR teams (Virginia K-9 Rescue and Recovery and K-9 Alert Search and Rescue Dogs, Inc.), numerous other K-9 teams are making a positive difference in communities across the commonwealth; their contributions to securing the safety of others being critical, as Billings and others involved observe. Law enforcement officers such as Ashland Chief of Police Douglas A. Goodman, Jr. are strong in their praise.

Contrary to popular belief, bloodhounds can follow a scent through water.

"Virginia K-9 Rescue and Recovery provides an invaluable service to the men and women of the Ashland Police Department," stated Chief Goodman. "Their efforts have contributed to the successful investigation of several serious crimes." It was Chief Goodman who represented the Ashland Police Department when, in 2009, the department presented Virginia K-9 Rescue and Recovery team members Lynda Plummer, Julie Fisher, and Tracy Brooks (and their dogs Annie, Tess, and Dixie) with their Citizen of the Year Award to "recognize these exceptional citizens both human and canine that have partnered with us in the truest sense of 'Community Policing'... for assisting our officers with tracking suspects that are involved in crimes... to helping reconcile families with loved ones who have wandered off and gone missing... These citizens have always responded, no matter the time of day or night."

Virginia K-9 Rescue and Recovery operates as an independent unit. They work strictly with bloodhounds and have developed expertise in



Left, bloodhounds work on-lead. Above, Annie is being "scented-up." She will identify that exact scent.

criminal investigation. They will respond only to requests from law enforcement. Just ask team leader Lynda Plummer's mom; she'll tell you. When her church was burglarized and she asked the team for help, she was told to follow procedure and notify the Hanover County Sheriff's Department… when an officer called Lynda, the team would respond! The call was made and the bloodhounds trailed the suspects to their homes. They later confessed: case solved!

Bloodhounds are trailing dogs and, unlike air-scent dogs or tracking dogs (dogs that follow tracks, like crushed vegetation), bloodhounds are trained to follow one scent, eliminating others. Working in a harness, head down, they pull their handler toward the target. "Relentless" would be a good descriptor. Chief Deputy J. Joseph McLaughlin Jr. of the New Kent County Sheriff's Office has worked with the team on several cases. He noted, "Without their assistance people and property would not have been located so quickly. We've worked with them for eight years and they've never turned us down."

One suspect, upon seeing Annie roiling toward him—95 pounds of muscle, nose, jowls, and feet—simply stood up and surrendered, showing remarkable clarity of thought, considering. The team travels light: a bottle of water, a GPS unit, and reasonable expectations, relying on law enforcement (always just behind but never out of sight) to provide protection and any extra supplies needed.

"My officers stay behind the canine teams, always keeping visual contact while maintaining radio contact with the incident commander," stated McLaughlin. "During one search that lasted 36 hours, Plummer made a suggestion that I believe resulted in our locating, and possibly saving the life of, a disabled person who had wandered precariously close to railroad tracks. The services they provided over the years have been an invaluable resource to New Kent County."

Sheila Montague, Wilderness Handler-in-Training, watches as Hannah swipes a treat during a well-deserved break.

Carmen Johnson (right) and her dog Dixie are working toward certification. Training is constant and rigorous.

The sentiment is echoed by James City County Investigator Bill Gibbs, who has seen firsthand how the team can make a difference. "The bloodhounds have an amazing ability to track over time," said Gibbs. "In one case, K-9 Tess led us to the source of evidence that linked a suspect to the crime. This link made the case come together. They are part of us and we are part of them when we are working together. They are saints as far as I'm concerned." Would investigators from the James City County Police Department have found the link between the evidence and the criminal without the help of the K-9 team? "Not as quickly and maybe not before the suspect fled the area," said Gibbs.

While Virginia K-9 works as an independent unit, K-9 Alert Search and Rescue Dogs, Inc. (K9 Alert)—a Midlothian-based organization—is a member of the Virginia Search and Rescue Council. As such, it operates as a state resource under a Memorandum of Understanding with the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM). Units associated with VDEM work to locate missing persons, victims of natural disasters, victims of crimes, and clues resulting from crimes. They also participate in recovery on both land and water. Should VDEM be involved in a missing person case, here's how events might unfold: Law enforcement contacts VDEM and requests the support of K-9 teams; VDEM notifies area SAR dispatchers who call their team members; responding units proceed to the site where the missing person was last seen; a command center is set up and a 360 degree circle is drawn to delineate the search area.

Typically, a "hasty" (quick search of the area) is the first task K-9 teams perform. During a hasty, travel ways or land formations that might naturally be followed are quickly searched. Often things are resolved at this level. If not, an area search begins. The area is divided into sections, most often by natural boundaries, and each team is assigned a section to scour. While searching, handlers continually evaluate the "possibility of detection" (POD) for their area, working to reach as high a POD as possible. Difficult terrain, unfavorable winds, severe weather, or unforeseen conditions result in a low POD. Should that happen, the area is searched again using different resources. Once the area is completely searched a report is made to the incident commander. Teamwork and attention to detail can result in lives saved, as was the case one unusually hot, humid morning last May, deep in

Scott Schumann (kneeling) watches as his English Lab, Jazz, makes it through a tight squeeze. K-9 Alert trains every weekend regardless of the weather.

a swamp in King George County. K-9 Alert was there, as was their newest member, Von Ellett, and his recently certified Labrador retriever, Reese.

In 2005 Ellett was asked to act as a "walker," an aide for a K-9 search and rescue team. Walkers accompany K-9 teams and provide another set of eyes and ears and help with equipment and map and compass readings. Sometime during two days of searching Ellett discovered his passion. By 2006 he had his Lab; in 2007 he joined K-9 Alert; and last March, 2009, Ellett and Reese completed their training and became SAR operational. While Ellett makes the leap seem easy, it's not. Time has shown, however, that Ellett has that one quality that cannot be tested, yet makes all the difference. "The most telling characteristic anyone involved in search and rescue can have is a passion for what they do," said David Fleenor, President of K-9 Alert Search and Rescue Dogs, Inc. "The ones that finish the training and stay with the team simply, above all else, have that passion."

Qualities easier to evaluate are the handlers' determination to stay physically fit, become proficient in radio communication, map and compass reading, first aid, animal first aid, and wilderness survival skills. "Let me say this," said Ellett, "If you're going to do search and rescue, you're not going to do anything else."

Shortly after becoming operational, Ellett responded to a middle-of-the-night call for help with a search in King George County. A young person was missing in a swampy area of woods along the Rappahannock River. Up at 4 a.m. and arriving by 7, Ellett, Reese, and fellow team member John Lohr were assigned an area stretching from the road through the swamp to the river. Moving forward was laborious. "The area was wooded—lots of trees, pine saplings, oaks, and lots of swamp grass. Every now and then you could see a few dry spots," said Ellett. "In other places the mud was waist-high on the dog."

Reese is an air-scent dog. She follows the scent of shed skin cells which drift on the wind—providing a "trail of particles" for her to follow. Air-scent dogs run off-lead and, once they locate a human, will return to their handler. Depending on their training, the dog will signal the handler by jumping, tugging, or barking; then lead their handler to the subject. The handler will reward the dog and keep him searching until the correct person is found. "Reese found the subject around 9 a.m.—the same time John made eye contact," said Ellett. "When Reese came back to me to indicate, I put her back on lead. I could see the person was startled. It must have been scary alone in the woods."

Here's another scary detail: Just prior to the rescue, a clue was found in another section of the woods; teams were being called to focus their efforts in that area. While others might have changed direction, SAR training dictates you clear your entire section before moving on. Had Ellett not been so thorough and well trained, would things have turned out as well? Possibly. Most likely not.

What is clear is that SAR teams are filling a need and making a difference in our lives and communities. We are all safer for their efforts. No one wants to be the one that has to make that middle-of-the-night call for help, but all who are found in that situation should know this: There are K-9 teams who will come to your aid whenever you need them. They will stay as long as you need them. That is the dedication law enforcement relies on. That is the passion Fleenor is talking about. □

Rick and Kim Bidwell and their Labs, Kelty and Petra (right), are all members of K-9 Alert. Kelty was rescued from a shelter.

Gail Brown is a retired teacher and school administrator.

The Rest of The Year

story and photos
by David Hart

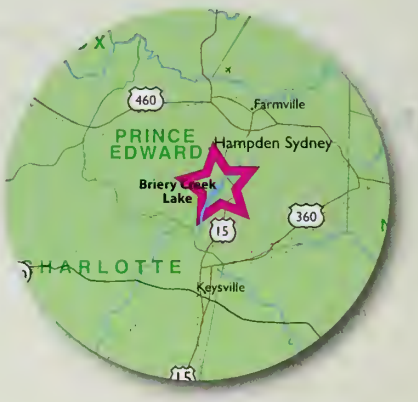
Two weeks after Briery Creek Lake opened to the public in 1989, Wayne Purdum found himself weaving in and out of the thick trees that stood in the chilly water. It was late January, and Purdum wasn't sure where to start. Access was limited to just a single gravel ramp at the lower end of the reservoir, and the standing timber was so thick at the time a long run toward the upper end just wasn't an option. It was, after all, his first trip to this scenic 845-acre reservoir and Purdum was mostly getting a feel for the lake.

"I ended up finding a line of trees that came off the bank. It looked like it ran next to a submerged road bed, so I just started casting a jig to that tree line," he recalled.

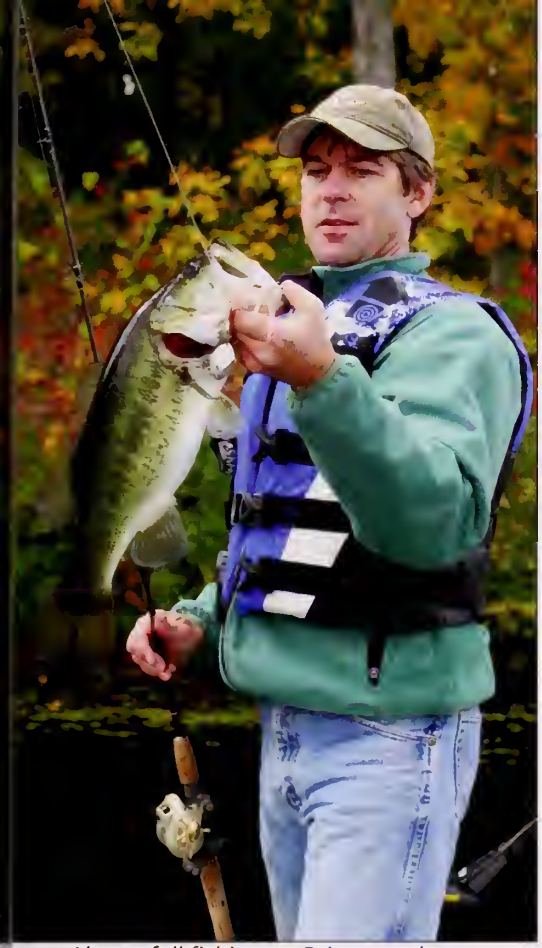
It turned out to be a good decision. When the day was over Purdum, a meticulous record-keeper, landed 41 bass, many near four pounds. Almost all of them came from that single tree line.

"I broke off some huge fish. I just wasn't prepared," he said.

Since that first year, Briery has become Virginia's premier trophy bass fishing destination, not just for Purdum, but for countless others. Anglers come from all over the mid-Atlantic region in March and April armed with stout rods, big baits, rope-thick line, and visions of 10-pounders. During the peak season, however, finding a place to park a truck and trailer can be as tough as finding one of those giant bass that made this Department-owned lake famous. Locating some undisturbed water is equally challenging.



Think the best fishing takes place in March and April? Think again.



Above, fall fishing on Briery can be downright fantastic and offer solitude. Below, dragging a frog, rat, or weedless spoon across the surface can result in some heart-pounding action.

"I would say there are as many as 400 anglers on the lake on some of the most popular days in the early spring," speculated regional fisheries biologist Vic DiCenzo. "About 70 percent of the total angling effort takes place that time of year."

That's one reason Purdum favors the less popular seasons. He does fish during the early spring, but he says anglers who abandon Briery after April are missing out on some great fishing action, even for the giant bass that every angler dreams of catching. He fished this lake 53 times in 2009, including 18 days in June, July, and August when he caught an astounding 887 bass. Yes, 887, including numerous bass over four pounds. He boated one over eight pounds last October. His brother-in-law hooked one that Purdum estimated at "12 or 13 pounds" in the late summer a few years ago. His best day last year?

"Seventy-three. I've had a number of hundred-fish days in the past and I was skunked just once last year and that was in the winter, when I typically don't catch a whole lot of fish," Purdum told me.

If that's not enough incentive to grab your tackle and head to Briery in the summer and early fall, consider this: You'll have the lake almost entirely to yourself, particularly if you go during the week. Although DiCenzo doesn't have specific numbers, he's seen days that time of year where the lake was virtually deserted. And as Purdum can testify, catch rates actually go up during the warmer months. According to creel survey data, the overall catch rate at Briery is actually the highest in the region, topping even nearby Sandy River Reservoir, Kerr, and Lake Chesdin. It also ranks number one for overall bass numbers.

Unlocking Briery's summer/fall pattern isn't that difficult; Purdum almost always fishes deeper creek channels and rarely ventures close to shore. That's why he's baffled that so many anglers continue to pound the shoreline when they aren't catching bass.

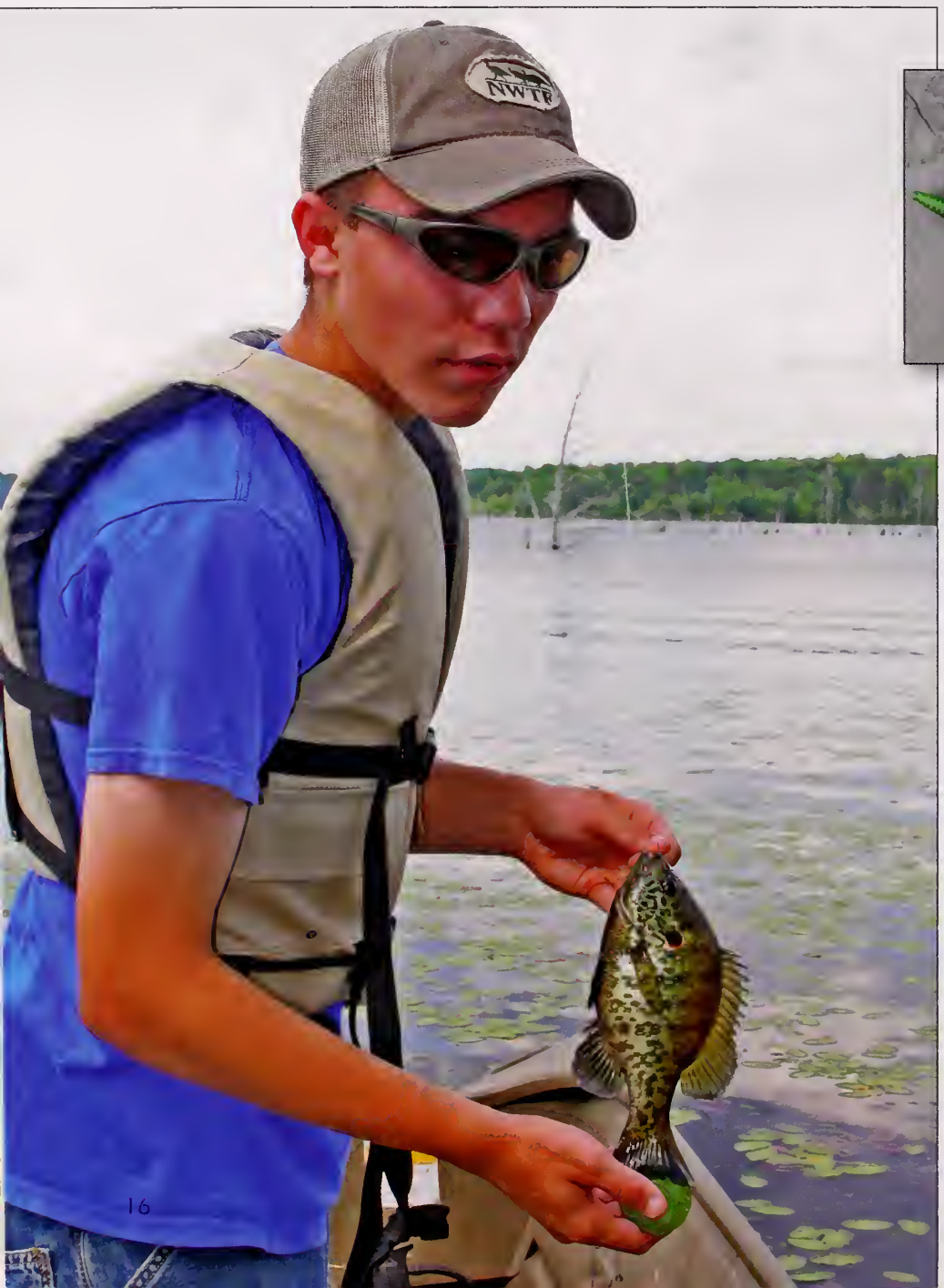
"One day I watched two guys going down the shore casting spinnerbaits. I guess they saw me catching a bunch of fish so they came over and asked me what I was doing," recalled Purdum.

Always willing to share his tactics, Purdum carefully explained the bait, the location, and the retrieve. When he finished, the other anglers shrugged.

"They said, 'Thanks, but we don't like to fish that slow,' and they went back to fishing spinnerbaits along the banks," he said. "I didn't see them catch anything."

Purdum recalls that story not because he's bragging, but because he often talks to anglers who struggle to catch more than a few fish outside of the spring. As a 20-year veteran of Briery, Purdum learned long ago that the secret to success is to move away from the shore, slow down, and use lures that the bass don't see every day. Common lures like spinnerbaits and larger topwaters often don't garner a second glance from finicky bass in Briery's clear water. Those same fish do, however, willingly eat soft plastics and other lures they don't see on a daily basis. Purdum uses a weedless, wacky-rigged soft plastic worm that he throws in water up to 15 feet deep, particularly around the many creek channels that wind across the lake bottom. He uses that rig more than anything and he typically fishes in the 5- to 12-foot range almost all year.

Another key to catching bass on Briery after early spring is to use smaller lures like finesse worms, smaller versions of popular baits, and other downsized soft plastics. The adage "big baits catch big bass" is true, but big bass will also eat a small lure on this lake. Those little baits call for scaled-down tackle like 8-pound line on a spinning rod, but



Wayne Purdum's *Worm Rig*

Briery regular Wayne Purdum uses a variety of lures when he fishes this lake, but one lure outfishes all others. It's a simple combination of a 7-inch Zoom trick worm, a short piece of plastic tubing, a nail weight, and a 3/0 Gamakatsu octopus hook. He rigs a modified weedless version of a wacky rig with the nail weight in the tail of the lure.

"Nothing produces better and I use it all over the country and I use it all year," he said.

Purdum typically uses watermelon/red flake, but he insists color really doesn't matter. He'll gladly throw pink, white, black, or green pumpkin, whatever he happens to grab when he opens his tacklebox. He simply casts it out and allows it to sink toward the bottom. If a bass hasn't grabbed it before it reaches the bottom, Purdum picks it up, reels in the slack, and lets it fall again. He focuses on 5- to 15-foot-deep creek channels, moving until he finds a concentration of fish.

Left, shellcrackers are big and abundant, making fishing fun for young anglers.

A floating jerkbait twitched on the surface over submerged grassbeds can draw subtle strikes from big bass.

there is a trade-off: You'll hook more fish, but there's a good chance a big bass will wrap your line around a tree limb. It's a worthy trade-off for many anglers who would rather hook more fish and worry about getting them in the boat afterwards than not hook as many to begin with.

That's not to say the pads and other shallow cover don't hold bass. They do, even during the blistering summer heat typical of southern Virginia. During summer electrofishing efforts, DiCenzo often finds quality fish in skinny water, including a 13½–pounder that was in five feet of water in August. In fact, the heat and high, bright sun can actually create a red-hot shallow pattern on Briery. The dense watershield (mistakenly called lily pads by many anglers) that rings the shoreline provides shade and cover and can hold good numbers of largemouths throughout the summer. For many anglers, that's the prime opportunity to pull a frog or weedless rat across the surface of the pads. Bass see the movement above them and explode on the bait. It's one of the most exciting ways to catch bass anywhere, and Briery is no different.

Not Just Bass

Largemouth bass may be the biggest draw, but Briery also has excellent populations of sunfish, crappie, and catfish. DiCenzo doesn't have much data on the panfish or catfish, but he does know that anglers come from far and wide to cash in on the fantastic redear sunfish populations. Redears, also known as shellcrackers, typically live in deeper water much of the year, but they come shallow in late May and June to spawn in openings in the watershield and among the countless trees in shallow water. Find a big bed of them and you can have a ball. Although it is possible to catch a few on artificials, fresh-dug garden worms or store-bought red wigglers are the ideal bait. Simply drop a worm-baited hook into a school of bedding shellcrackers and you can catch all you want.

The fish can seem too easy to catch and some anglers are concerned about the potential for overharvest. However, the average size continues to hold up well, and fish up to a pound are caught regularly. DiCenzo says it's virtually impossible to harm the redear fishery because the lake is so fertile and sunfish are prolific breeders.

The crappie fishery is largely untapped and is also as good as almost any lake in the state, with lots of two-pounders pulled from the flooded timber each year. Finding them, however, is like finding a needle in a haystack. The lake is a sea of standing trees and stumps, all perfect crappie habitat, which is one reason the crappie grow so big.

"I don't have any biological data because the lake is difficult to sample for crappie, but I don't hear any complaints from those who fish for them," noted DiCenzo.

He won't hear many complaints from bass anglers who visit this lake in the "off-season," either. The fish are there and are always willing to eat a lure—that is, if you use the right one in the right spots. □

David Hart is a full-time freelance writer and photographer from Rice. He is a regular contributor to numerous national hunting and fishing magazines.

Why Grass Carp?

In 2008, fisheries biologists added 5,000 ten-inch grass carp in an effort to control the aquatic vegetation that was slowly swallowing Briery. According to district biologist Vic DiCenzo, the grass wasn't just shrinking the lake's volume, it was robbing the water of vital nutrients like plankton. As a result, the recruitment rate for baby bass was dismally low.

"During some sampling efforts we would go through areas that should have turned up hundreds of young-of-year bass that only produced ten or so," said the biologist. "They were basically starving to death before they were old enough to switch to insects and fish. There was just very little phytoplankton. That's not good for the long-term health of the fishery."

By removing a large portion of the submerged vegetation, the baby bass will have more food to eat and, thus, a much higher survival rate. The Department has been stocking upwards of 20,000 fingerling bass over the past few years to fill the void, but DiCenzo hopes to stop that after the grass thins out.

Contrary to popular belief, grass carp don't eat bass eggs. The carp will eventually reach upwards of 30 pounds and fisheries biologists may open them to harvest, but until then, they need to stay in the lake to help the bass that made this lake famous get big.

Be Wild! Live Wild! Grow Wild!

story by Cristina Santiestevan
illustrations by Spike Knuth

Sometimes the simplest problems are the toughest to solve.

For example, how do we halt the freefall in their population and restore Virginia's bobwhite quail to our landscape?

It's simple. And, horribly difficult. We only have to learn to love weeds.

Fallow fields and overgrown fence lines may seem an eyesore to many, prompting calls for mowers and bushhogs. For bobwhite quail, however, those unkempt fields and fence lines look like home. A tangled mess of clover and cowpeas, poison sumac, and wild plum trees is exactly the sort of habitat those tiny game birds prefer. "It's not just weeds and brush," states Marc Puckett, wildlife biologist and small game project leader for the Department. "It's an ecosystem like any other."

Bobwhites are far from alone in their preference for abandoned fields and pastures. Countless species rely upon these scrubby landscapes for shelter and food and a place to raise their young or weather winter's storms. A healthy stand of shrubs and weeds will support a dizzying array of birds, mammals, and reptiles. Field sparrows and golden-winged warblers take to the skies while Eastern box turtles nose through fallen leaves. Predators from the mighty Northern harrier to the scrappy least weasel cruise for field sparrows, Southern bog lemmings, and other smaller, meeker neighbors. Whip-poor-wills and American woodcocks share their haunting songs as evening falls. And, amongst them all, coveys of bobwhite raise another generation of chicks.

But, all of these species are listed as

Bobwhite quail

Species of Greatest Conservation Need in *Virginia's Wildlife Action Plan*. These animals, like their habitat, are slowly disappearing from Virginia's landscape. As the weeds and shrubs are cleared away, the animals that rely upon them are literally erased.

The decline—of weeds and the animals that rely on them—began in the first half of the last century. As farming practices shifted toward more intensive methods, the abandoned fields and weedy fencerows were tamed. The weeds and shrubs that bobwhite count upon were erased from the landscape; too inefficient for modern agricultural practices and too messy for anyone to protest their absence. But, the problem goes deeper than weed-free corn rows and fescue-planted pastures.

There is simply less open space available today. In 1920, approximately 80% of Virginia's land was in some form of agriculture. Today, that number is hovering around 34%. Active and fallow fields, pastures, mixed-crop farms, and weedy fencerows have all been swallowed by suburban expansion: roads, homes, and shopping malls.

Re-creating this patchwork of scrubby habitat is no small task. This is where the simple problem—lack of suitable habitat—becomes extremely difficult to solve. "Forty or fifty years ago, this habitat largely occurred by accident," says Puckett. "Farmers just did not have the time to mow every field every year." The result was a constantly changing patchwork of fallow fields and weedy fence lines that supported a mess of shrubs and flowers and wild creatures. "To have this habitat now requires conscious effort," Puckett notes. Conscious effort, and an awful lot of work.

The challenge comes from several quarters. Farmers, understandably, want to eke every bushel of productivity from their acreage. Homeowners want a tidy lawn. Property managers and developers want clean medians and neatly mowed fields. No one seems to want the weeds and mess of a healthy, scrubby, bobwhite-attracting

Field sparrow

EM WEEDS!

ACT WILD

Here are three simple ways you can help Virginia's bobwhite quail and other weed- and bramble-loving creatures:

1. Learn to love a mess. A field of weeds and brambles may look unkempt, but it is home-sweet-home for bobwhite, songbirds, weasels, turtles, and more. And, if we can look past the wild tangle, there are countless wildflowers to smell and colorful butterflies to chase.
2. Welcome some "weeds" into your yard or fields. Anyone with the space for 20 acres of brambles and tangles could soon be providing a home for a whole covey of bobwhite. But even those of us with only 20 square feet to spare could soon be hosting hummingbirds and butterflies and colorful warblers.
3. Share the beauty of weeds with friends, family, and neighbors. Thank landowners who have set aside some space for a little unkempt wilderness. Ask homeowners associations to consider introducing a little disorder and beauty into the neighborhood. Talk with teachers and community officials about introducing little pockets of habitat wherever space permits.

Learn more and get involved

Whether you own acres of pastureland or only have a few spare inches on your windowsill, there are ways to help out. Visit the DGIF website to learn more about Virginia's quail conservation efforts, partnerships, and incentives for landowners at: www.dgif.virginia.gov/quail.

Contact the closest private lands wildlife biologist to learn about maintaining your property for quail and other weed-loving species:

Andy Rosenberger, SW Virginia
540-381-4221 extension 128

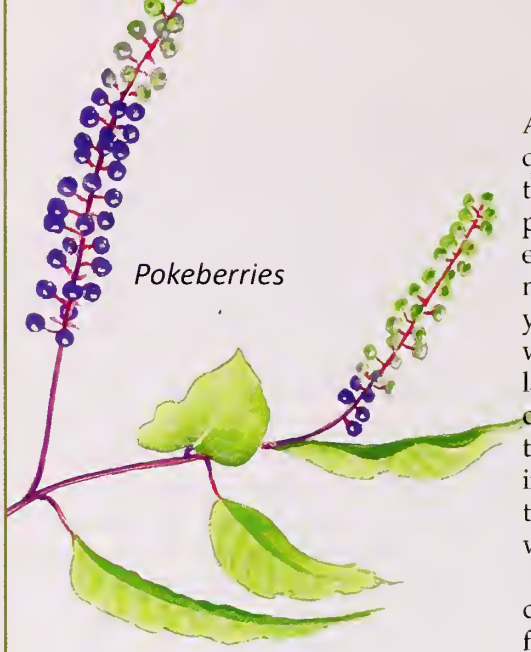
Katie Martin, SC Virginia
434-392-4171 extension 106

Kenneth S. Kesson, NW Virginia
540-248-6218 extension 108

Mike Budd, NE Virginia
540-899-9492 extension 101

Tiffany Beachy, SE Virginia
757-357-7004 extension 126

Marc Puckett, Statewide
434-392-8328



Pokeberries

habitat. Why choose weeds over lawns, or disorder over order? But, if we want to preserve Virginia quail hunting and homegrown wildflower honey and the song of the whip-poor-will on summer evenings, this is exactly what we must do. We must, says Puckett, embrace the mess and "learn to love a weed." If we can do that—if we can learn to see the beauty in brambles and weeds—then we can go a long way toward saving a whole category of wildlife that is slowly disappearing from Virginia's hills and valleys.

Naturally, it will take more than a shift in attitude to save these species. A great deal of sweat will be required too. And, because so few of the necessary acres are state owned, private landowners will be the leaders in this project. Virginia's DGIF may be facilitating the state's one-year-old Quail Action Plan, but it will be private residents and landowners who determine its success. If we save bobwhite quail in this state, it will be because enough individuals agreed to welcome a little bit of disorder—a little bit of wilderness—onto their property.

Converting habitat from close-cropped pastures, tightly managed fields, and weed-free developments takes time, energy, and no small investment of money. Interested landowners will find an eager ally in their local, private lands wildlife biologist (see *Learn more and get involved* for contact information). Financial assistance is also available.

A full covey of bobwhite may require 20 or more acres to survive winter's harsh conditions, which means farmers and other large property owners hold an advantage here. Within the boundaries of their property, these individuals may be able to piece together enough acres to host an entire population of bobwhite quail. Their summer days may soon be filled with cries of *bob-bob-white*,

Least weasel

If we save bobwhite quail in this state, it will be because enough individuals agreed to welcome a little bit of disorder—a little bit of wilderness—onto their property.

and their cool-weather strolls could soon be punctuated by the thunderous roar of a dozen quail rising from their shelter amongst wild crabapples and dried grasses.

Although whole fields of shrubs and weeds are excellent, smaller parcels of land will be just as important to the recovery of bobwhite and other weed-loving, upland species. Strips of weeds and brambles along fence lines and roadways offer both food and shelter. Small patches of shrubs and native grasses can be knit together through a larger patchwork of woods and fields, creating an array of habitats that support a rich diversity of creatures. Even isolated pockets of wildflowers and shrubs in a tiny backyard will attract brown thrashers and Eastern towhees. A single flowering plant can make a difference for native pollinators.

Of course size is not the only issue, and not every property will work for quail and their compatriots. Wetlands, for example, make an excellent home for waterfowl, otters, and fishes, but hold no appeal for quail and their scrub-loving companions. Likewise, mature hardwood forests will not offer the open, patchy habitat the birds prefer. But, those trees provide essential habitat for countless other species. If your property suits a different type of habitat and creature, don't bemoan your tall trees or wetlands. Instead, advises Puckett, "Appreciate them. And, manage the habitat for the species that need it." The message is simple: Bobwhite quail are not the only wild creature worth protecting in the state.

Our fields and wild places have seen a disorienting amount of change in the past few decades. Shifting agricultural practices and expanding commercial and residential development have gobbled up countless acres of weeds and shrubs. And, as their habitat has disappeared, the birds and reptiles and mammals that rely on them have followed. There is still time to save Virginia's bobwhite and other weed-lovers, but time is running short.

"These species... They don't need our help 15 years from now or 20 years from now," declares Puckett. "They need our help now." □

Cristina Santiestevan writes about wildlife and the environment from her home in Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains.

Mockhorn Isl

On a remote island, evidence of a lavish past

by Curtis J. Badger

©Tommy O'Connor

Larrimore and Caroline Cushman built this two-story retreat on Mockhorn in the early 1900s and surrounded the property with a concrete seawall to protect it from high tides. Vintage photos courtesy of Tommy O'Connor

There is a lot of water out in Magothy Bay, but as an old waterman friend once told me, "It's stretched mighty thin." Magothy Bay separates the mainland Eastern Shore from the south end of Mockhorn Island, a 7,000-acre state wildlife management area (WMA) that stretches for several miles along the coast of Northampton County. Magothy Bay is not only shallow, it also includes surprises such as oyster rocks, sandbars, and clam beds which can quickly do expensive damage to boat motors. My son Tom and I were with Steve Garvis, a conservation police officer who has patrolled these waters for much of his career with DGIF, and Steve seemed to know the location of each clam bed and rock. We avoided them all.

We launched at the public boat ramp in the aptly named village of Oyster, headed east, and soon were cruising parallel to a low-lying ribbon of cordgrass that was swaying in the breeze, salt water lapping at its heels. This was Mockhorn—low, long, and narrow—an inner island that does not front the Atlantic as barrier islands do, but rather, serves as a cushion between the barriers and the mainland.

Mockhorn has been a WMA since 1959, but before that it had a very colorful human history, and on this particular day it was *that* aspect of Mockhorn we were interested in. At first glance it is an unassuming place, and then you begin to consider its past. Suddenly it becomes much more than a grassy seaside island.

©Tommy O'Connor

T.A.D. Jones with a nice catch of black drum, circa 1950.

©Dwight Dyke

AND MEMORIES

©Tommy O'Connor

©Tommy O'Connor

After Larrimore Cushman died in 1948 the property was purchased by T.A.D. Jones, from Connecticut. The seaplane (top) was used to fly guests to and from the retreat. Above, this amphibious vehicle called the "duck" was used to transport visiting hunters to duck blinds around the island.

Native people hunted and fished here, and when European settlers came, this was one of the first places they explored. Captain Samuel Argall, who was commissioned to fish along the coast to support the Jamestown colony, visited these islands in 1610 and reported "a great store of fish, both shellfish and others." Argall explored Smith Island, just south of Mockhorn, and reported to Sir Thomas Dale, then governor of Virginia, that this low-lying barrier beach could be used to distill salt from sea water. Argall's "a great store of fish" meant little unless this great store could be preserved in brine for a reasonable length of time to sustain the colony over winter. So salt production was begun on Smith, using large clay vats heated by fire to distill the salt from the sea.

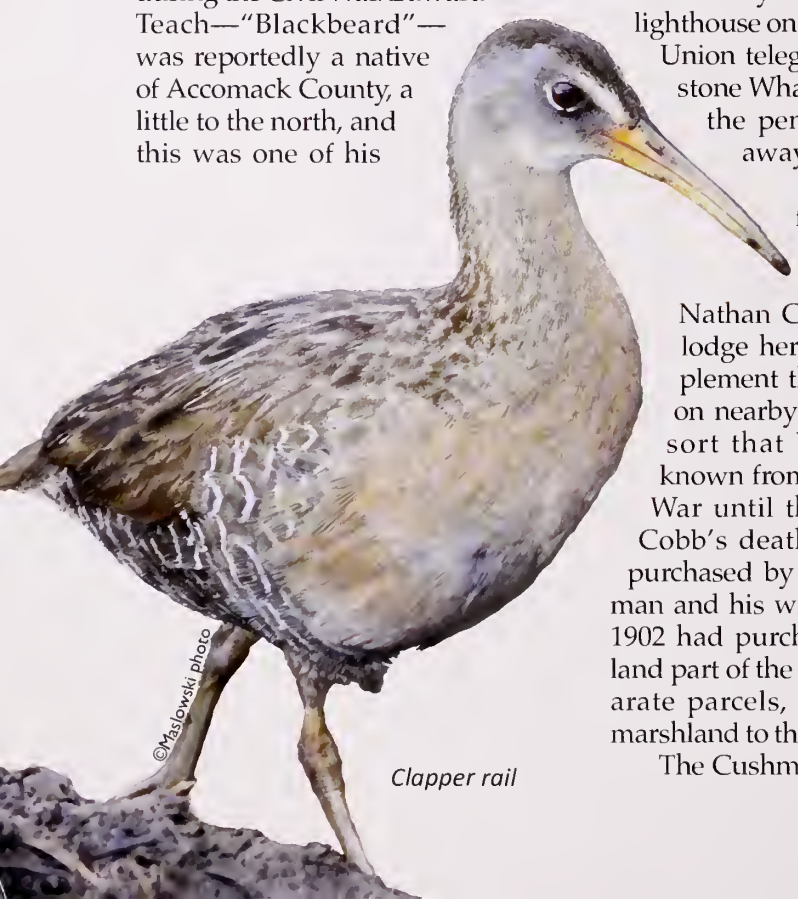
Mockhorn soon became a salt producer as well. According to Ralph T. Whitelaw's *Virginia's Eastern Shore*, John Custis, the great-grandfather of Martha Custis Washington, entered into a contract with Peter Reverdly on April 4, 1668 to make salt on the island, which was then owned by Custis. Reverdly was apparently an expert at the salt-making process, and a lengthy contract gave him instructions to build 312 clay-lined evaporation ponds for extracting salt from the sea. Unlike on Smith Island, fire was not to be used in the process. Reverdly used solar radiation to

distill salt, so it could be said that Mockhorn engaged America's first solar powered industry.

With Steve Garvis at the controls of the skiff, we cruised the western edge of Mockhorn, looking for more recent evidence of the human past. The northern end of the island is low, with saltmarsh cordgrass *(Spartina alterniflora)* spreading like a saltwater prairie as far as the eye can see. This area of the island has been a favorite among rail hunters for generations. Lunar tides in the fall drive the water high into the marsh, covering all but the highest stands of grass. These are the few times during the year when clapper rail can be successfully hunted. Otherwise, there is simply too much grass for them to hide within.

As Garvis headed south, we saw higher land in the distance: cedars, wax myrtles, a few scrubby pines. And then we saw two World War II era watchtowers standing side by side on a sandy beach. We were nearing the south end of Mockhorn, and we were closer to finding what we were looking for.

Mockhorn's colorful past includes tales of pirates and Confederate guerilla bands who hid out here during the Civil War. Edward Teach—"Blackbeard"—was reportedly a native of Accomack County, a little to the north, and this was one of his favorite hiding places. In 1863 during the Civil War, John Yates Beall, a southern espionage agent serving in the Confederate Navy, hid on Mockhorn with his men before the raid that destroyed the Cape Charles lighthouse on Smith Island and the Union telegraph line at Cherrystone Wharf, on the bay side of the peninsula a few miles away.



Clapper rail

©Tom Badger

Little remains of the Cushmans' island retreat. This window once looked out over pasture and gardens, a scene that is quickly being reclaimed by salt marsh plants.

But we were looking for evidence of a more permanent nature. In 1852 Nathan Cobb built a hunting lodge here, no doubt to complement the facility he owned on nearby Cobb's Island, a resort that became nationally known from the end of the Civil War until the late 1800s. After Cobb's death the property was purchased by Larrimore H. Cushman and his wife Caroline, who by 1902 had purchased the entire upland part of the island in several separate parcels, as well as the vast marshland to the north.

The Cushmans, who made their fortune in the bakery business in New York, added on to Cobb's modest lodge, eventually building one of the last great island retreats on the Virginia coast. The home has not been lived in for more than half a century, but like a ghost, its presence still hovers in a cedar thicket on a bit of high land on the south end of Mockhorn. Garvis slowed the skiff to idle speed and nudged the bow onto a sandy beach. Next to us was a row of rotting pilings—all that remained of the dock used by residents and guests when they arrived from the mainland.

We crawled up a bank covered with crumbling concrete and soon were in a shady grove that once sheltered a portico. Select columns still held the weight of the canopy; others were scattered along the ground like fallen soldiers. We walked through the remains of a doorway and entered the large foyer. A stairway on the left would have led to guest quarters on the second story, most of which had caved in. Much of the woodwork, including wainscoting and fireplace mantels, had been re-

©Tom Badger

©Tom Badger

The Cushmans built many outbuildings using concrete made on the island. In the foreground (top) are cold frames used to propagate plants. Above, a seawall surrounded the Cushman compound to protect it from high tides. A century later, much of the wall still stands.

moved. A tub remained in a tiled bathroom, no doubt a luxury on a remote island in the early 1900s.

What appeared to have been a courtyard separated two wings of the building. Mrs. Cushman was an enthusiastic gardener, and the remains of some of the plants she introduced were still there.

A huge cedar tree had died but was still upright, wrapped by wisteria vines the size of my arm that covered much of the house. The purple flowers were in bloom, and I could hear the hum of bumble bees above me.

We left the courtyard and came to an opening in what appeared to be the working part of the farm. The entire compound was surrounded by a sea wall built of concrete, with local shells embedded in the mix. I realized that this was not just a hunting lodge or a vacation getaway for a wealthy family. A century ago, they lived a self-sustained existence here, something that today might be featured in an issue of *Mother Earth News* for the well-to-do.

There were many outbuildings made of concrete, a building that appeared to be a smokehouse, a dairy, a dozen or so concrete cold frames facing the southern sun, pasture that at one time would have had livestock and chickens, a pond that might have been an aquaculture project. Rusting farm implements were covered with dried brown cordgrass left by the last high tide. The place looked like a medieval fortress, a project that obviously, even a century later, displayed the creativity, the drive and, indeed, the obsession of the owners. I wish I could have known them.

Local historians say the Cushman compound was done in by two factors. The Great Depression of 1929 eroded the family fortune, and the deadly hurricane of 1933 broached the seawall, flooded the property, and covered the fertile land with salt water. Today, after decades of a rising sea, fields which once grew vegetables and pasture grass grow salt-marsh cordgrass.

After Larrimore Cushman's death in 1948, his widow sold the island to T.A.D. Jones, a government contractor from Connecticut who added a more modern frame barn and who often entertained military officials and politicians, who would fly in by sea plane or helicopter to spend a few days shooting black ducks in the shallow ponds and adjacent marshes. The big barn built by Jones was said to be the headquarters of many lavish parties. It still stands today, if missing a few pieces of siding. An amphibious vehicle called "the duck" was used to transport guests to duck blinds some fifty years ago, and it is still there, parked just inside the barn door, a badly rusted old soldier that just might be ready for one final skirmish. □

Curtis Badger, whose most recent book is A Natural History of Quiet Waters *(UVA Press), has written widely about natural history and wildlife art. He lives on Virginia's Eastern Shore.*

Life Beyond Video G

Getting youngsters interested in the great outdoors is a growing challenge.

by Marc N. McGlade

For many folks, the landscape has changed regarding their interest and involvement in the outdoors. Nationwide, license sales for hunting and fishing continue to remain unchanged, with no evidence of the trend climbing. Dealing with kids today who would rather play their Nintendo DS or Wii (or other "name your video game player here") is a challenge that all of us dedicated to the outdoors must now consider.

Children face far more distractions than those of previous generations. Communication is instantaneous; technology is changing at light speed; and news—both good and bad—is constant. Text messaging and social media websites, even for youngsters, in many cases replace the telephone. While these things are undergoing rapid change and transformation, the outdoors opportunities for people of all ages is still as vast as ever. The challenge is not as many people are taking advantage of these opportunities, and that will have consequences for years to come.

Back in the day—using current fashion cliché vernacular—youngsters could be found outside playing baseball, throwing a football, running around the neighborhood, wading in streams and turning over rocks to look for crawfish, fishing, hiking, camping, and hunting. This list is not all-inclusive, but you get the picture. Kids played outside, and when called in for dinner would scream, "I'll be there in five minutes, Mom!" Not that I was like that, mind you. I'm just saying.

Today it seems moms and dads have to practically push their fledglings out the door to get them to sniff Virginia's clean outdoor air. The answer to why would take volumes to produce. Perhaps some insightful suggestions to get people back outside would be a better, more useful approach.

Ways to Get Kids in Touch with the Outdoors

There are easy and cheap ways to introduce or maintain an affiliation with the outdoors. There are also ways to ruin any chance of a person relating to the outdoors in the future.

For example, let's take the bass fishing addict. He and his buddies participate in local tournaments. They fish during practice days leading up to the tournament. They're on the water from sunup to sundown, trying to figure out what the fat largemouths are up to in order to cash a check. Well, if they intend to bring their young sons or daughters on a trip like that, forget it. Nothing will turn off a kid faster than spending too much time casting and not enough

©Dwight Dyke

Kids are pulled in many directions, but one look at these faces says that fishing boosts self-esteem while they have fun.

Angles to Pursue for Outdoor Adventures

- Join the Cub Scouts or Boy Scouts. Visit www.scouting.org, or for details specifically in Virginia, visit www.scoutingvirginia.org.
- Join the Girl Scouts; visit www.girlscouts.org.
- Participate in YMCA- or 4-H-sponsored activities.
- Take a kid fishing or hunting. To learn more, visit www.HuntFishVA.com.
- Take the family camping. To make camping reservations, call (877) 444-6777 or visit www.recreation.gov. To contact Virginia State Parks, visit www.dcr.virginia.gov/state_parks. To learn about state park offerings and overnight accommodations, e-mail resvs@dcr.virginia.gov or call (800) 933-PARK.
- Take a hike. Ride a bike. Come late fall, put bird feeders out in the backyard.
- Take a child target shooting, plinking, or out to shoot skeet, trap, or sporting clays.
- Learn about the National Shooting Sports Foundation at www.nssf.org.
- Learn about the Future Fisherman Foundation ("Hooked on Fishing—Not on Drugs") and their efforts at www.futurefisherman.org.

ames

time catching, especially if the weather isn't conducive to enjoying the day.

Short, enjoyable outings are much more likely to "hook" youngsters, whether fishing or hunting. Choose times when the bream are biting well, or when the shad run is in full swing in March and April. Keeping safety always at the top of the list, allow the child to run the trolling motor or start the engine under supervision. If kids are small enough, they can safely sit in front of you and hold the steering wheel *with you*. Anything to make them feel involved will aid in their thirst for more.

Try spring gobbler hunting with a child, as few things are as exciting as calling birds and having them answer. If camping is your thing, opt for the spring and fall seasons when the weather is more comfortable, or be selective on summer days so you don't need an IV-drip to stay hydrated.

Here's a tactic I employ. My son plays video games and loves doing so. I'm the bass-crazed fisherman, so I know I have to dial it down when I take my son out. During the last few outings I've let him bring along his handheld to play video games while on the boat with me. The stipulation is that he agrees his video time can only be for short increments. For instance, we'll start in the mid-morning hours and fish for bass, bream, or crappie and hopefully catch a few to maintain his level of interest. If he wants to take a break and crack open the video game, even though I might cringe inside, I'm fine with it. He'll play with that for 10 or 15 minutes, then pick up the rod and start chunking-and-winding to catch something. To fishing purists, this might seem absolutely ridiculous, but I've found that it works well with my son and other kids I know. They don't get fishing crammed down their throat this way. I can fish for days on end, all day, but I can't expect that of my son. Nor should I. The goal is to dangle the carrot enough that they want more. If that means meeting in the middle, well maybe that's worth a try.

Another option to partake of the outdoors is for families to pack a picnic lunch together at a nature park. Many locations throughout the state have ponds available in these settings. Before or after lunch, the family might hike along the trails, point out and identify wildlife together, fish, skip rocks, or any other get-in-touch-with-the-outdoors activity. If good memories are created, we stand a better chance of having youngsters want to continue to get outside.

Short, enjoyable outings are much more likely to "hook" youngsters...

Not all outdoors exposure for children needs to be the consumptive type, such as hunting or fishing. It can be the "softer side" of the outdoors, such as bird watching, or using binoculars to identify flora and fauna, or star-gazing—anything—to get them outside of the house and in touch with nature.

Do Your Part

Well, don't just sit there! Do something and make a difference in someone's life. Helping a child stay on the straight and narrow is never an easy chore. This story is not about the evils of video games. It's about broadening a youngster's view of the world outside the walls of the family room.

Video games do not appear to be a fad. If they are part of your family's dynamic, perhaps purchasing a fishing or hunting video game is in order. Hopefully, some identification with the outdoors will take place. After playing a game of this genre, the conversation on the boat or pier the next time could reference some aspect of the game's goals or graphic elements. There are several outdoors-oriented video games on the market, and if they can aid in getting kids outside, then so be it.

Now is the time to act to cultivate a love of the outdoors with the younger generation. After all, they are the future leaders of Virginia. They will be making decisions about conserving and protecting outdoor resources—including wildlife. □

Marc N. McGlade is a writer and photographer from Midlothian. As a self-proclaimed angling addict, Marc travels across Virginia fishing for a variety of species.

©Marc McGlade

The Nature Conservancy in Virginia Celebrates 50th Year

by Curtis J. Badger

The Nature Conservancy
Protecting nature. Preserving life.™

When the state acquired the Big Woods tract in southeast Virginia in July, it marked a major milestone in a long-term relationship that has protected tens of thousands of acres of ecologically significant land in the state. It just so happened that this year is the 50th anniversary of the Nature Conservancy in Virginia, and the role the conservancy played in protecting Big Woods was typical of the private/public partnership that has worked so well for 50 years.

Big Woods is a 4,400-acre pine savanna in Sussex County, home of the historic longleaf pine and the endangered red-cockaded woodpecker. The conservancy has been purchasing parcels in the area for years, gradually assembling a large tract that straddles the Nottoway and Blackwater River watersheds. In July a significant portion of the land was turned over to the state to be managed jointly by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and the Department of Forestry. Big Woods Wildlife Management Area will be a 2,200-acre preserve managed for red-cockaded woodpeckers, bobwhite quail, and other species. Big Woods State Forest will be Virginia's only state forest in southeast Virginia, and its 2,200 acres will be managed for sustainable forestry.

Creation of the Big Woods preserves is typical of the partnership between the state and the conservancy that has been so successful. As a private conservation organization, the conservancy has the ability to quickly purchase key parcels when they become available, a quality the less nimble state government does not have. In most cases, the conservancy designs and implements a management plan, frequently in partnership with the state, and eventually many of the parcels are purchased by the state when funding becomes available. A notable exception would be the 40,000-acre Virginia Coast Reserve, a barrier island wilderness on the coast that continues to be managed by the conservancy some 40 years after the first purchase.

Over 50 years of conservation, the Nature Conservancy has literally touched every corner of the state. "Our first preserve was in Northern Virginia," said Michael Lipford, director of the Nature Conservancy in Virginia. "Perhaps our most notable project was protecting the last of the coastal wilderness along the mid-Atlantic, and of course we've done a great deal of work in Southwest Virginia with the Clinch Valley program, which began in 1988. More recently, the Allegheny Highlands program has protected more than 9,000 acres on Warm Springs Mountain."

Not a bad track record for an organization that began in someone's living room and operated for 25 years strictly on volunteer energy. "The conservancy in Virginia literally began in Elizabeth Bocock's living room on Franklin Street in Richmond," said Lipford. "State senator Fitzgerald Bemiss was there, as was attorney George Clemon Freeman, Jr. and Richard Pough, who was president of the Nature Conservancy nationally."

After 50 years and tens of thousands of acres preserved, Virginia is still benefitting from that meeting on Franklin Street. □

Celebrating 50 years of Conservation in Virginia

2010 Outdoor Calendar of Events

Unless otherwise noted, for current information and registration on workshops go to the "Upcoming Events" page on our website at www.HuntFishVA.com or call 804-367-7800.

October 1–3: *Hunter Skills Weekend,* Holiday Lake; (434) 248-5444 or http://holidaylake4h.com/.

October 2: *Women Exploring Loudoun Outdoors,* (ages 14 and older). For more information: www.loudouniwla.org. For registration: lcciwla_welo@hotmail.com or call (540) 535-8891 or (703) 939-4089.

October 7–10: *Eastern Shore Birding and Wildlife Festival,* Cape Charles.

October 7, 9, 14, 16 & 19: *An Introduction to Photographing Birds* with Lynda Richardson at Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden. Go to www.lyndarichardsonphotography.com and look under 2010 Workshops or www.lewisginter.org and look under Adult Education for classes, or call (804) 262-9887.

October 16: *2010 Annual VHS Fall Symposium,* Virginia Zoo, Norfolk, 9 a.m.–5:00 p.m. For more information: www.virginiaherpetologicalsociety.com.

October 20–December 15: *An Introduction to the World of Digital Photography* with Lynda Richardson at University of Richmond's School of Continuing Studies. For more information go to: http://scs.richmond.edu/schedules-catalogs/think-again/schedule-film-photo.html or call (804) 289-8000.

November 6: *Northern Shenandoah Valley Birding Festival,* Winchester, www.audubon-nsvas.org.

©Maslowski Photo

QUAIL ACTION PLAN

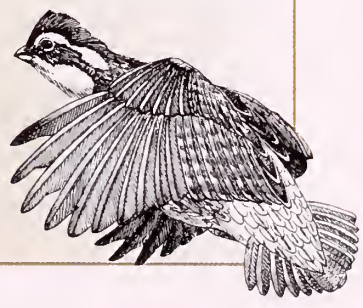
Department staff are working with a broad range of public and private partners to restore critical upland habitat needed by the bobwhite quail to thrive. Among the many initiatives underway are:

- Establishment of early succession wildlife focus areas across the state, in concert with the work performed by Soil & Water Conservation Districts in Virginia;
- Wildlife professionals assisting with delivery of USDA Farm Bill programs to landowners that benefit quail and other, early succession wildlife species; and
- Establishment of demonstration areas that showcase technical management tools put in place to effectively manage for quail.

A new video, *Answering the Call, Virginia's Quail Recovery Initiative,* highlights the work being done by many state and federal agencies to restore quail habitat in Virginia. This video provides information on managing private lands for quail and encourages landowner participation in the quail recovery effort. Landowners interested in viewing the video can find it at www.dgif.virginia.gov. A limited number of DVDs will be produced. To request a video, or for more information about Virginia's Quail Action Plan, email DGIF biologist Marc Puckett.

For more information about the quail plan, go to: www.HuntFishVA.com/wildlife/quail/action-plan/quail-action-plan.pdf

To contact a Private Lands Wildlife Biologist: marc.puckett@dgif.virginia.gov



by Beth Hester

Two Stately Virginia Rivers Amidst Changing Times

Down on the Chickahominy: The Life and Times of a Vanishing River
by Jack Trammell
2009, The History Press
$19.95
www.historypress.net

River Runs Free: Breaching the Rappahannock's Embrey Dam
2004, The Free Lance-Star Publishing Company, Fredericksburg
$15.00

We focus this month on two books that by very different methods successfully document the life and times of two important Virginia rivers: the Chickahominy, and the Rappahannock.

In *Down on the Chickahominy: The Life and Times of a Vanishing River*, author Jack Trammell takes a modestly ethnographic approach, relying on his background in history and on his natural curiosity to uncover and record the river's almost forgotten natural, social, and cultural histories. He takes the reader on a lively journey from early colonial outpost to modern community, whose beloved river faces ever-new environmental challenges. Trammell spent three years studying the changing Chickahominy River region and the natives and 'newcomers' who for generations have fished, farmed, and lived along the river's banks. During his travels, he interviewed over 20 subjects and uncovered numerous, important photographs and sketches that show the remnants of vanished native Chickahominy villages, forgotten Civil War roads and bridges, giant perch, and the remains of the revered and once ubiquitous Chickahominy River boats.

Like one of Jack's subjects wryly stated: *"It's not history till someone cares about it."* Well, Jack Trammell cared, and as a result, our knowledge of the Chickahominy region is all the richer for it.

* * *

If you enjoy pictorial histories, especially ones that go "BANG," then our second volume, *River Runs Free: Breaching the Rappahannock's Embrey Dam* is for you. It's a photo-essay that centers around the giant, quarter-second explosion that on February 23, 2004 finally breached the Embry Dam—a relic of industrial progress that had harnessed the river's energy for multiple purposes. That dam also impeded its natural flow, altering for decades the character of the natural world that surrounded the famous watershed that begins at Chester Gap, then winds its way through multiple Virginia counties before ending 184 miles later at Stingray Point.

As grassroots efforts to remove the dam—which had outlived its usefulness—grew, so did the optimism that migratory fish would return to natural patterns of movement, that native grasses, bushes and small trees would begin to take root along formerly barren shorelines, and that future generations of anglers would catch 'fat, row-filled American shad.'

Engineering efforts to breach the dam involved the dredging of 250,000 cubic yards of silt from behind the structure, the drilling of 240 holes in which 600 pounds of plastic explosive had been packed, and the expertise of a cadre of Army divers from Fort Eustis.

Shortly after noon on that chilly February morning, as Sen. John Warner prepared to push the ceremonial plunger, he quoted a passage from Ezekiel: *"There will be a great multitude of fish because these waters go there; for they will be healed, and everything will live where the river goes."* □

"Before they hunt they do an online search."

Youth
Waterfowl Hunting Day
October 23, 2010

Dwight Dyke

www.HuntFishVA.com/youth

It was 9 P.M. I had just settled down in my cozy bed, listening to "Three Dog Night" on the stereo and leafing through the latest issue of *Virginia Wildlife*, when I heard a knock at the door. It was kinda late to have visitors, but I have been known to be somewhat of a party animal, so these types of interruptions are not entirely unexpected.

When the door opened, who should be standing there but ol' Jones looking more forlorn than a lost beagle puppy on a rainy night. I motioned him in and ol' Jones shuffled past me and flopped down in my favorite leather chair. "To what do I owe the pleasure of this late night visit?" I asked. "You aren't thinking of the two of us going coon hunting tonight are you?"

Jones just sat there and then let out a deep sigh. "I have lost it," he said dejectedly. "I was down at the sporting clay range today, practicing up to get ready for dove season and I kept missing those right-to-left crossing shots—and I wasn't doing so good on the incoming shots either. I could not hit a bull's behind with a banjo! I have totally lost my shooting touch. How am I going to face my fellow members at the Lonesome Dove Shooting Club's annual dove shoot this season?" he moaned.

I started to tell Jones that it is pointless to worry about losing something you never really had, but one of the reasons we are man's best friend is that we know when to keep our mouths shut. Instead, I offered him something to eat, hoping to improve his mood. "I have some leftover pizza crust you and the missus tossed in the trash last night," I suggested, "and I still have some of that buffalo jerky you picked up while we were on that South Dakota hunting trip a couple of years ago. I think the expiration date might still be good."

He sputtered, "How can you think of food at a time like this?!" not hiding his agitation. "Don't you realize that the members of the Lonesome Dove Shooting Club look up to me and my shooting ability? You know how old Doc Morrissette tries to imitate my skills!" Frankly, I had never seen the old doctor miss, so I thought he was a very poor impersonator of ol' Jones's shooting skills. Again, I kept this to myself.

"I think you are looking at this all wrong," I opined in my most comforting manner. "You think that a dove shoot is all about getting your limit! Well, for the young pups out to prove themselves it may be, but for us older dogs—we would rather find a comfortable spot in some shade while you blast away at feathered darts about a dozen-and-a-half times and call it a day. We hate to go retrieve those things in the hot summer sun, risking heat stroke for a mouthful of feathers and very little else!"

"Say you knock down a half-dozen birds," I continued. "Just what can you do with six dove breasts? It is hardly worth firing up the grill!"

I went up to ol' Jones, placed my paw on his knee, and looked him right in the eye. "Tell me truly," I asked, "What is the most fun about a good old southern dove shoot?"

"Why, I believe it is the camaraderie and the socializing after the shoot," Jones stated, as he was *finally* getting the picture. "It's the food, and the conversation, and catching up with old friends you do not get to see often enough."

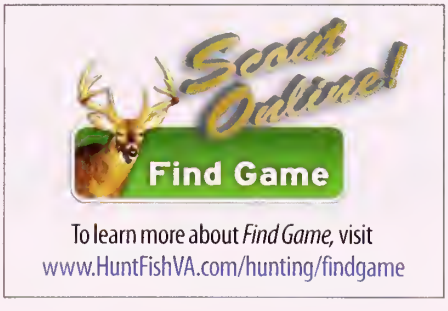
"Precisely," I agreed. "And do you talk about all the birds you shot? No. You laugh about the misses! In fact, the least popular person there is the one who brags about how fast he limited out. You will learn—the older you get—that you are just happy you can *carry* a shotgun, a dove stool, and a box of shells. You just want to see the folks there whom you have always seen, and drink a toast to the memories of those who've seen their last dove shoot."

"I am beginning to understand what you mean," murmured Jones as he walked to the door. "I shouldn't worry about the number of birds in the bag; I should learn to be happy with the misses as well."

"Now you've got it," I replied as I closed the door behind him. "The way you shoot, you will be one of the happiest people there!" □

Keep a leg up,
Luke

Luke is a black Labrador retriever who spends his spare time hunting up good stories with his best friend, Clarke C. Jones. You can contact Luke and Clarke at www.clarkecjones.com.



To learn more about *Find Game*, visit
www.HuntFishVA.com/hunting/findgame

Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson

Bright Light? No Problem!

This past spring I was on an assignment in which I had to photograph my subjects in a boat in bright sunlight. Using a flash to lessen the shadows on their faces I was having a terrible time reviewing the histograms and images on my LCD monitor to see if the exposures were correct. It was really frustrating! The bright sun made it impossible to see anything on the LCD screen, even when I stuck my head and camera under the steering console to try and darken my surroundings. It made the shoot go much slower than I would have liked and I vowed never to let it happen again!

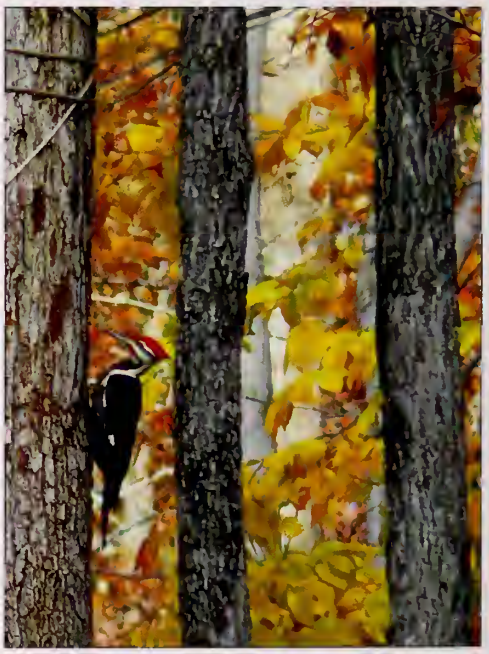
It was soon afterward that I discovered the Hoodman HoodLoupe Professional 3" LCD Screen Loupe, a glare-free LCD viewing loupe. The sturdy HoodLoupe is similar to a 35mm slide viewing loupe, but instead of viewing slides it is made to shade your digital camera's LCD monitor from surrounding light sources.

Covered with easy-to-grip rubber, this device is made to fit any LCD screen up to 3 inches and allows the user to see the screen at a 1 to 1 ratio. With a +/- 3 diopter adjustment that works just like a binocular eyepiece, the HoodLoupe's sharp German glass optics make it easy to view everything on the screen very clearly. The loupe sports a detachable lanyard so it can be worn around your neck. A small black case for storage in a camera bag is included. Not a bad investment at $79! Look for it in camera shops geared to professional clientele, as well as popular online sites like Hunt's Photo and B & H. For more information, check out www.HoodmanUSA.com.

The HoodLoupe works by shading bright light from the LCD screen so you can easily review your histograms and images. © 2010 Lynda Richardson

The next time you find yourself in an overly bright situation and frustrated at not being able to see your histograms and images, you might want to consider a HoodLoupe. Bright light? No problem! Happy Shooting!!! □

Image of the Month



Congratulations go to Leslee Breeden of King William for her beautiful environmental portrait of a pileated woodpecker spotted on a tree in her backyard. Panasonic DMC-FZ8K Lumix digital camera at 12X zoom, ISO 100, 1/200th, f/4.0. Great spotting!

You are invited to submit one to five of your best photographs to "Image of the Month," Virginia Wildlife Magazine, P.O. Box 11104, 4010 West Broad Street, Richmond, VA 23230-1104. Send original slides, super high-quality prints, or high-res jpeg, tiff, or raw files on a disk and include a self-addressed, stamped envelope or other shipping method for return. Also, please include any pertinent information regarding how and where you captured the image and what camera and settings you used, along with your phone number. We look forward to seeing and sharing your work with our readers.

On The Water

by Tom Guess

Do you have any matches... ?

If you're using a boat to hunt, you're a boater too. Nothing reminded me of this more than a lesson I learned as a teenager growing up in Sussex County.

Winter came early that year, with a light dusting of snow, a nip in the air, and a familiar smoky creosote smell wafting from nearby woodstoves. A good friend of mine lived on a large farm in the county where we had permission to hunt and fish. I recall that he lived in a typical old T-shaped farm house. That house backed up to a steep hill with a slash of hardwoods before the land dropped off to an oblong-shaped pond about 5 acres in size. Trees hugged its shoreline around three sides. At the opposite end of the pond was an old dam that was washed out but still tended to by a den of industrious beavers. Beyond the dam was prime squirrel hunting land, replete with oaks and cypress that stood watch over the meandering run that led eventually to the Blackwater River.

On this particular day we did as teenage boys will do and decided to make our squirrel hunt an adventure by throwing a canoe trip across the partially frozen pond into the mix—with snow on the ground. Granted, walking would have not only made more sense but would have taken half the time, not to mention sparing us the fate that awaited.

We donned our hunting clothes and prepared our canoe for its voyage across the icy water to our squirrel hunting grounds. We were prepping for our trip as though it were a week-long adventure into the wilderness. Carefully, we placed our unloaded shotguns on the deck across some old throwable seat cushions; we put on our lifejackets; we paddled off!

Shortly thereafter we found ourselves *in* the water. The temperature that day was in the upper 30s and I'm certain the pond was colder than that, because no sooner had I hit the water and gasped for air than I was making a beeline to shore—probably more on top of the water than in it, while managing to not lose my shotgun.

We made it to land and were met by my friend's dad. I remember being so cold and shivering so hard that I could hardly speak. But somehow I got out the question, "Do you have any matches... I'm freezing?" We all laughed because we were dripping wet.

What possessed us to go out that day? I'm not too sure. But I do know that many hunters use a boat as a conveyance to go hunting, which makes them boaters. Remember, when hunting from a boat keep your guns unloaded and pointed in a safe direction. Be sure to dress warmly for the water temperature, since water is colder than air and you can lose body heat through hypothermia in water 25 times faster than in the air. Be sure to take a boating safety education course as well as a hunter education course, and be sure to outfit your boat with all appropriate safety equipment.

Until next spring—Be Responsible, Be Safe, and Have Fun! □

Tom Guess, U.S. Coast Guard (Ret.), serves as a statewide coordinator for the Boating Safety Education Program at the DGIF.

©Dwight Dyke

Dining In

by Ken and Maria Perrotte

Roast Duck with Orange Marmalade Glaze

Sometimes the best intentions for a complicated, savory wild game dish are dashed by a dose of reality, and the compromise becomes a simple, yet flavorful meal.

So it was with the carefully plucked wood duck we had thawed with aspirations of a complicated meal inspired by those foodie magazines. After a day spent gardening and attending to other household chores, Maria was tired and absent residual energy for assembling—let alone measuring—numerous ingredients.

So, complicated yielded to simple. Ken cut the duck in half and sprinkled with a couple of spices. Maria topped it with a commercial jam and put it in the oven to roast; then, propped up her feet and enjoyed a nice glass of wine.

Ingredients

1 well-plucked duck, with skin intact
Garlic pepper
Lemon pepper
Orange marmalade

Preheat oven to 325°. Cut a plucked duck in half, lengthwise, just as you might cut a small fryer chicken so that each half has a leg, thigh, and breast. This also facilitates cleaning any remaining innards or pieces of shot that may have stubbornly hung in when the duck was first dressed and plucked.

Season lightly with garlic pepper and lemon pepper. Place in baking dish with skin side up. Coat skin liberally with orange marmalade and bake uncovered for about 45 minutes, depending on the size of the duck. Do not overcook.

Put a few tablespoons of pan drippings in a small bowl, skimming off the fat. Stir in another teaspoon or two of marmalade and use as dipping sauce.

A note about the types of ducks to cook with this recipe: We prefer "puddle" ducks whenever a minimalist approach is used for wild waterfowl. Wood ducks, teal, mallards, gadwall, and similar taste good this way. The rich flavor of the meat shines through the seasonings. Canvasbacks can be delicious, too, prepared this style.

Diving ducks that have a substantial diet of fishy critters just don't seem to fare as well, although bluebills, ringnecks, and shovelers can be very tasty depending on what percentage of their diet is fish-oriented. But, if you adore the taste of a bufflehead or a hooded merganser, then by all means give them a minimalist try.

Sides

In the "keep it simple" approach, steamed baby carrots make a nice, quick side dish. Wash the carrots and place in microwave-safe container. Add a dash of salt and a little butter. Cover tightly and cook on high for a couple of minutes until crisp tender.

Of course, wild rice is a natural accompaniment with duck. Make a little extra of the sauce with pan drippings and sweep a forkful of rice across it on the plate. Ummm.

A simple green salad, such as a few pieces of your favorite ripped lettuce and rings of red onion, some baby corn, and a light dressing makes another nice match.

A glass of fruity merlot or a pinot noir adds to the enjoyment. □

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

Photo Contest Reminder

The deadline for submitting photographs for the 2010 *Virginia Wildlife* Photography Contest is November 2, 2010.

Winning photographs will appear in the special March 2011 issue of the magazine. For more information about the contest and to view last year's edition online, visit the Department's website at: **http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/photocontest.**

Take a friend,

MAKE A HUNTER

Dwight Dyke

Virginia Apprentice Hunting License

The apprentice hunting license serves as a first-time Virginia resident or nonresident hunting license and is good for 2 years.

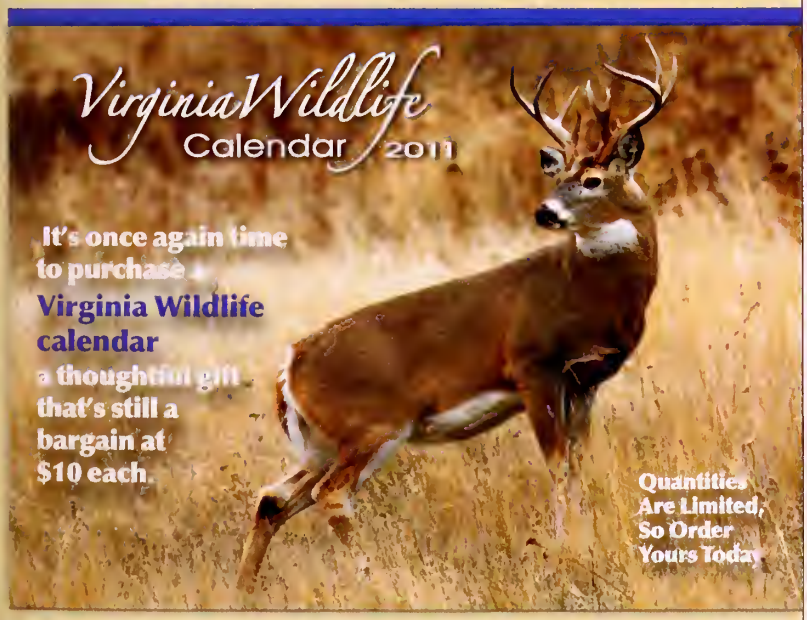
The license holder must be accompanied and directly supervised by a mentor over 18 who has on his or her person a valid Virginia hunting license.

The apprentice license does not qualify the holder to purchase a regular hunting license, nor exempt the holder from compliance with Department regulations. A hunter education course must be successfully completed to obtain a regular hunting license.

A bear, deer, turkey license and all applicable stamps or permits are required in addition to the apprentice license.

Previous Virginia resident and nonresident hunting license holders may not use an apprentice license.

To learn more about the Virginia Apprentice Hunting License, call (866) 721-6911 or log on to **www.HuntFishVA.com**.



As always, the calendar features spectacular photography and useful information to the outdoors enthusiast, including hunting seasons, favorable hunting and fishing times, wildlife behavior, state fish records, and more!

Make your check payable to "Treasurer of Virginia" and send to:
Virginia Wildlife Calendar
P.O. Box 11104
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